

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.
Wednesday, January 15, 2014
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

Members Present: Ed Bonilla, Alice Torres, Christine Fahey, Sheila Daniels, Jim Gaudreau, Wendy Berlind, Beverly Lawrence, Susan Macary, Susan Sienkiewicz, Liz Fraser, Monica Beylea, Amy Waterman, Izzi Greenberg and Jerome Long. Also Present: Pat Alston and Kate Bond.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Co-Chair Ed Bonilla called the meeting to order at 12:07 P.M. thanking those present. Introductions were made.

II. Announcements: Wendy reminded everyone of the upcoming preschool information fair at Russell Library on this Saturday. She also circulated a flyer for the "Minds in Motion" program K - Gr. 8 to be held at Snow School. The organizers are looking for volunteers. Chris circulated two Middletown Early Childhood Network workshop flyers – *Sensory Issues in the Preschool Classroom* and *A Glimpse into the Culture and Child-Rearing Practices of Turkish and Muslim Families*; a flyer *Using the Ages and Stages (ASQ) Parent Questionnaire*; a flyer for *CT Cares 2014 – A Conference for Child Care Providers*; and a flyer for the *Nurturing Prenatal Program*.

III. Acceptance of the Dec, 18, 2013 School Readiness Council meeting minutes: Wendy Berlind moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Susan Macary seconded. The motion carried unanimously with thanks.

IV. Financial Report: was distributed and showed a balance of \$17792.50 in unearned funds. Program directors continue to look for students to enroll. This is the largest unearned balance in over ten years and the enrollment decline is happening across the state. SmartEarly Learning Center has the highest number of openings due to their location and lack of access to public transportation. In January, we hope to receive six additional spaces for the Bielefield classroom to convert the current full-pay spaces to subsidized ones.

V. Coordinator's Report:

Monthly Summary Report: was distributed reflecting the first six months of the fiscal year and showing no drastic changes. The vast majority of children being served are from low income families.

Arts Grant: A \$10,000 Arts Catalyst grant and a \$5,000 grant from the Middlesex County Community Foundation were received for the storytelling program. CT Storytelling Center plans on inviting 15 Middletown preschool teachers to attend their April conference at no charge.

Kindergarten Study: As requested by the Council, a closer look at the kindergarten registration forms for the current kindergarten children with no preschool experience was given to see if they grew up in Middletown or moved here recently. Due to incomplete information on the forms, we cannot answer the question. Chris will remind EISTs in the spring to please review the forms during registration to insure that all information is complete so that we are able to look into this in the future.

Local Programs News: Town & Country had an unannounced licensing inspection last week and had no violations! This is very unusual. South Farms had their reaccreditation visit and while that was underway, they had an unannounced licensing inspection visit. Both visits went well.

Race To The Top Update: Connecticut's application was not funded. A summary report of the scoring was prepared and distributed. It was noted that the Office of Early Childhood intends to use the application as a blueprint and will move forward items that it can move without the resources of the grant. Discussion around the scoring followed.

DSS Status of Child Care in CT Report - Summary of Highlights: was distributed to the Council. The Care4kids program will move to the Office of Early Childhood on July 1, 2014. There will be a focus on policy changes in the Care4Kids program. Presently, parents may access Care4Kids if they are working, but not to go back to school. This creates a deterrent for those who want to create new opportunities for themselves. This policy will be looked at closely.

National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) Review Report: was distributed. It outlined a review of Connecticut's child care licensing program. The summary of highlights showed no surprises – inconsistencies in inspections, the need for training of inspectors and child care program directors, and the need for a more supportive system were all cited. Licensing moves from the Dept. of Public Health to the Office of Early Childhood on July 1, 2014 where revisions will be a top priority.

Federal News: the budget bill that passed both the House and Senate has huge increases for early childhood items. A twitter campaign is underway to promote the president's *Strong Start* initiative. The Alliance is spearheading CT's participation. Photos are being tweeted to the president and members of Congress on January 21.

Circle of Security Update: Amy Waterman and her Family Resource Center staff are facilitating this program at Town & Country Early Learning Center for eight families (12 adults). This is a DVD program that looks at signs and cues for needs of children and helps parents understand the importance of attachment. Amy noted that a Circle of Security session began at Macdonough yesterday. Chris thanked Amy for this important work to support families. Even Start and Head Start are also facilitating sessions for parents.

Pre-K - K Alignment Committee Update: Visits between community preschool programs and public school kindergarten classrooms continue. Feedback has been positive. Tanya Kelly from Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) is conducting observations and coaching teachers in all of our kindergartens.

PreK – Grade Three: Alice reported that she is working with Barbara Sterns on early learning outcomes in K - 3. Area Cooperative Education Services (ACES) is making an effort to align PreK to Gr. 3. There are plans to offer a full day of professional development to administrators in June and Middletown elementary principals will be participating.

Alliance Update: A document with talking points for the support of the Office of Early Childhood legislation was distributed. Izzi and Chris will meet with our legislative representatives to share this important information and ask them to encourage their House and Senate colleagues to pass the bill early in the session.

Early Head Start (EHS) Update: Alice reported that there is an expectation for funds to return to EHS. Statewide analysis will take place for future plans. She also reported that there currently are two Child Development aides (4 hr.) positions to be filled. EHS has developed a new program called "You and Me Mondays". This will take place at Middletown Adult Ed and children must be accompanied by a parent. This program is using the Pee Wee model which will support the behavioral and emotional well-being of children beginning at 18- 20 months of age. An 11 hour a week Parent Engagement position opening is listed on their website. Alice distributed the EHS December 2013 newsletter, *Early Years Matter*. This edition has a mental health theme. The CT Head Start Annual Report was also circulated.

Even Start Update: Liz reported that Adult Education is being audited today. They are between semesters right now and waiting to see how the Even Start program fills as classes resume. She is starting legislative advocacy work on Even Start and met with Senator Bartolomeo today. There is new testing for the GED that is more difficult to pass.

Opportunity Knocks Update: Monica reminded everyone of the monthly meeting held at noon on the 4th Tuesday of the month in the Hazen Room at the YMCA and invited everyone to attend.

Child First Update: There are 16 families on the wait list. Please continue to make referrals so that Child FIRST can demonstrate the need for an additional team. Susan Sienkiewicz noted that other communities are in need, too.

Family Resource Center (FRC) Update: Amy reported that they are operating playgroups and conducting home visits. FRCs across the state are now using a new data system. She noted that this is a tough time for families and many are in crisis right now.

Discovery Report: A copy of the official announcement from the Graustein Memorial Fund about David Nee's replacement was distributed. R. David Addams has been named as Nee's successor. He comes from the Oliver's Scholars Program which identifies highly intellectual and curious African American teens and promotes their educational needs leading them to college. He will begin working at the Memorial Fund on March 1st. The Discovery Report is due at the end of the month.

Department of Children and Families (DCF) News: Susan reported that DCF working with Madonna Place to sponsor a 24/7 Dad program that will run for a 12 week session. Fathers who

have an open DCF case are eligible to enroll in this program that will have weekly themes. It will be held at Middletown Adult Ed beginning on February 5th from 6:00 - 8:00 P.M. No DCF staff will be at these meetings. The age of the father's children does not matter. 15 fathers are needed in total to run the program. Susan noted they currently have eight dads enrolled. She will send a flyer to Chris for distribution.

VI. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:27 P.M. with thanks to those in attendance.

The next meeting of the Middletown School Readiness Council will take place on
Wednesday, February 12th, 2014

from

12:00 - 1:30 P.M.

at

Wilbert Snow School

299 Wadsworth St.

Middletown, CT 06457

Respectfully Submitted by:
Sheila C. Daniels